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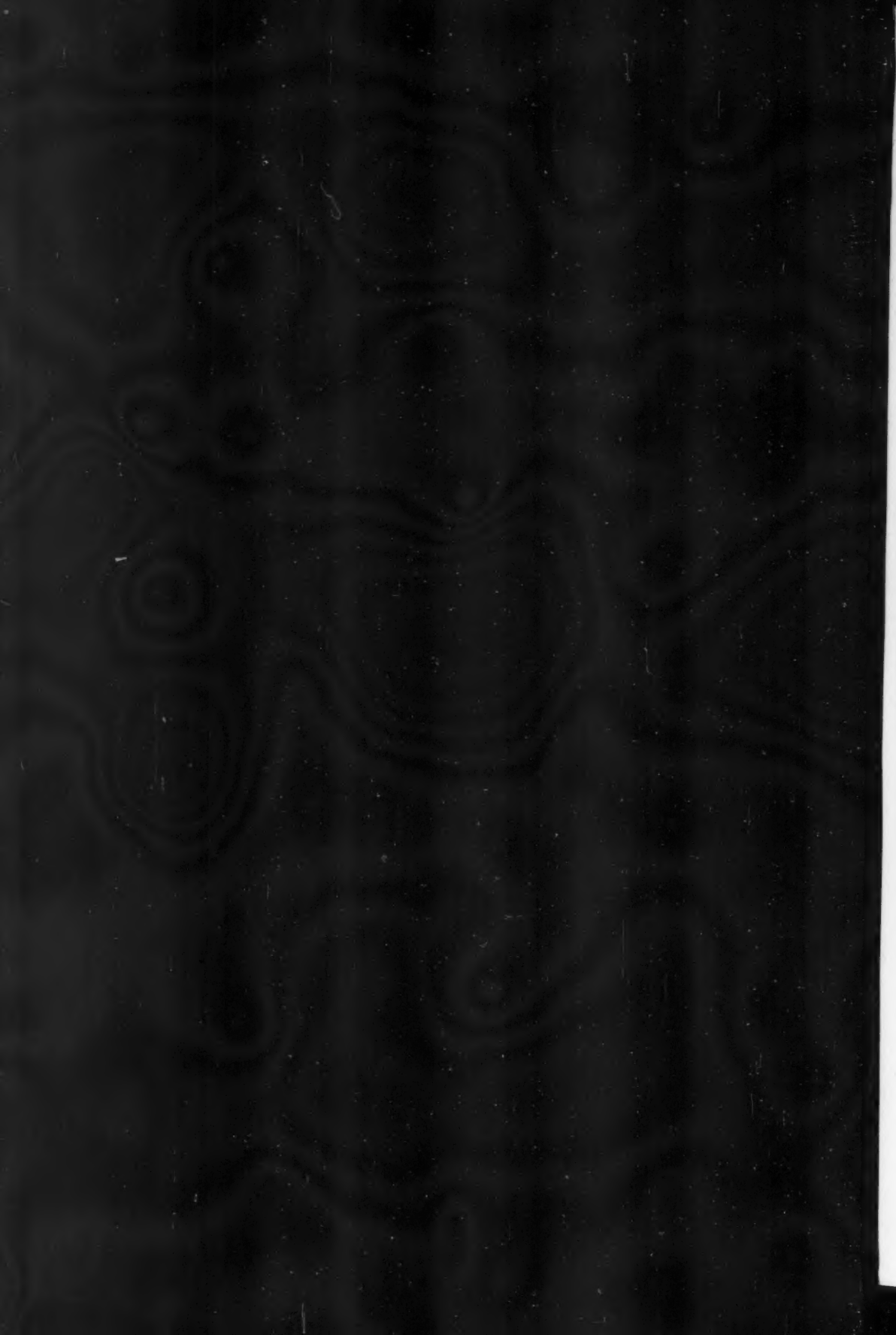
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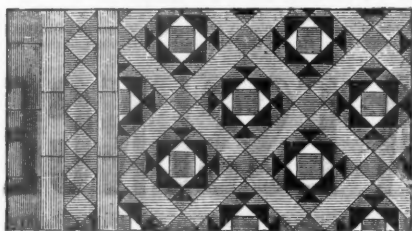
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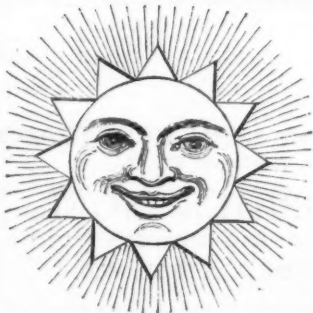
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# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

A Weekly Journal  
CONDUCTED BY  
CHARLES DICKENS

No. 701. NEW SERIES

SATURDAY, MAY 6, 1882.

PRICE TWOPENCE.

## JACK DOYLE'S DAUGHTER.

BY R. E. FRANCILLON.

### PART IV. PHOEBE'S FORTUNE.

#### CHAPTER VII. SIR RAYNER AND SIR CHARLES.

"Now, what in the name of impudence does this mean?" asked Ralph, tossing his friend the card. "Are you getting up a farce, and is this a bit of the business that you're rehearsing upon me? What sort of a man was it who sent in this thing? He was a gentleman, you say?"

"He might be, sir," said the footman. "He called himself one."

"Probably a part of his delusion," said Lawrence. "I suppose a man who fancies himself a baronet, when he isn't, has to fancy a good many things besides. You'll see the poor devil, I suppose? It might be fun."

"Yes, I'd better see him," said Ralph. "If he's dangerous, we had better dispose of him before my father comes home. Yes, bring him in. It's odd, Lawrence, but there was really a Rayner Bassett in our family; so there seems to be some sort of a method in the madness, if Sir Rayner Bassett of Cautleigh Hall turns out to be a madman."

"I was right, you see, about Lincolnshire being the land of adventure, and not town. But here he comes."

And so at last, just when Charles Bassett happened to be out of the way, there entered into the house of his fathers that terrible Uncle Rayner, whom all but his nephew believed to have died among the dogs ages ago.

Sir Charles had derived his ideas of Uncle Rayner from two excellent sources

—from family tradition and from his personal knowledge of the man who called himself Jack Doyle. The masterful profigate, the desperate criminal, the dangerous and unscrupulous ruffian had taken an invisible shape appropriate to his character. But it was no burly giant who followed his card into the library. On the contrary, Ralph found himself confronted by a shabby, shuffling old fellow, with vacuous weakness written in every line of his face and in the form of every feature.

"No danger there," thought Lawrence; "that man comes from the ward for idiots and imbeciles."

The self-created baronet smiled a broad and beaming smile, and held out two flabby hands.

"My dear boy!" he gushed in a thin and excited treble, "I'm your long-lost great-uncle Rayner! Don't you know me, now?"

"Indeed?" asked Ralph, more provoked than amused by what might turn out a troublesome if harmless case of monomania. He was free from the spice of malice which led Lawrence to find humour where there was really none. "What's the best way to deal with a harmless madman?" thought he. "Humour him, I suppose, till the keepers follow him. . . . I'm very glad you're found again, I'm sure. Where have you been staying all this while?"

"Oh, in London. The fact is, I didn't know till only the other day that so many deaths in the family, and such an amazingly low proportion of the birth-rate, had caused the title and the estates to fall to me. It was always an unlikely thing, and it has taken me a little by surprise. Of course I lost no time—as a matter of business, and for the sake of my boys, your cousins, you

know. I didn't write, because I thought I'd give you and your father, my long-lost nephew, a pleasant start, to find old Uncle Rayner still in the land of the living. Yes, great-nephew, here I am. How little changed the dear old place is, to be sure. I haven't seen it since I was a boy—I never hoped to see it again. And so you're your father's son! And a regular Bassett you are; I should have known you for my great-nephew anywhere. Eh—who's that gentleman there?"

"The family likeness between you and your nephew is indeed amazing, sir, as you say," said Lawrence gravely. "I said to myself that must be some collateral ancestor, as soon as you came in."

"You are pleased to flatter us," said the stranger. "It is clear that you have a large bump of penetration. Alas, sir! it takes a very large bump indeed to see the likeness between my nephew and me. I am not so young as I was at his age—not at all."

He gazed up at the ceiling with eyes that meant nothing. But Ralph, though claiming no exceptional gift of penetration, had already shown that he knew how to distinguish honesty from dishonesty in the teeth of contrary evidence, and the same feminine instinct enabled him now to perceive that his visitor was no mere imbecile with a monomania. Lawrence's attempt at chaff had been parried with dexterous simplicity.

Assuredly the intruder did not look like a Bassett, in any degree. He was dressed badly to the point of absurdity; but the cleverest tailor could not have made him look other than he was—a weak old creature, run utterly to seed.

"And I have had my ups and downs," said he, "particularly my downs. With a large family of hungry boys, it is important to be able to lay my hands on I don't know how many thousands a year. I've been a red-hot Republican in my time, and had some idea, once, of bringing every baronet in England to the guillotine. But we get wiser as we get older, and as we find that our efforts for the democracy are only met with the basest ingratitude. I would have the guillotine begin with milkmen, now. But public affairs must keep—they know how. I am anxious to see my nephew, who has, no doubt, given me up for dead long ago. He will remember me—though he didn't know me for his uncle in the old days. I was a dashing young fellow then. Heigho!"

"I think, Lawrence," said Ralph, "that you had better let us two interview one another privately, if you don't mind."

"By all means. No doubt you must have lots to say to one another, after such a life-long parting. I'll take a turn across the park, and see if any more adventures grow on your blackberry-bushes. By Jove! I wish my long-lost uncle would turn up; he's a long time coming. Is this another family mystery turning up?" thought he. "Have they been shutting up the rightful heir in a madhouse, and is this the man? If that's it—then, by Jove!"

"So you say you are my father's uncle?" asked Ralph, "and you come here in this extraordinary manner to take possession of Cautleigh Hall? You must really excuse me if I don't understand."

"Eh? Of course I am. Did you never hear of your great-uncle Rayner, my dear boy? Don't you know there was my poor brother, Sir Clement, whose sons were Mordaunt and a parson, and after my poor brother, Sir Clement, came my poor brother, your grandfather. But between my two poor brothers there came me. On my honour, as a gentleman, my dear nephew, it never came into my brains that the elder branch had died out in such an extraordinary and simply intestate way. There had been disagreeables between me and my relations, you know; such things will happen when people are brothers, and certain circumstances, over which I had absolutely no control whatever, obliged me to change my name. I have been living in retirement, in my humble but honest way, when a providential chain of circumstances revealed to me that, ever since the death of my nephew the parson, I have been Sir Rayner Bassett of Cautleigh Hall. My dear young nephew, I assure you that the news cannot amaze you more than it amazed me—I assure you—it makes me feel—I was born in Cautleigh Hall, you know, which you, nor your poor father, never were; and I never thought to set living eyes on it again. I used to sleep in the little room in the corner, with the turret window. I could find my way blindfold. Ah, my dear nephew, you don't know yet what it is to be an old fellow—anyway, not as young as you used to be—who's almost forgotten what it means to be a gentleman. You've never been driven to marry a washerwoman, and to be eaten out of house and home by half-a-dozen hungry sons. Would you like to take anything? Pray make yourself at home."

"You are very kind," said Ralph lightly, but nevertheless realising that, if this were a case neither of imposture nor of monomania, his rash wish to learn the secret temptations of poverty were in the straightest way of being fulfilled. Of course, he knew that his father himself had succeeded to the estates and title in the most unexpected manner, but had known nothing of the doubts by which Sir Charles had always more or less been troubled. Was the man an impostor, who had somehow become possessed of the family knowledge possessed by a real Uncle Rayner? He certainly looked a queer kind of a Bassett; but then no conscious impostor would have told, in such a simple manner, so vague a tale. He would have gone to work in a less melodramatic manner than he had adopted, and would have made much less sure of a hearty welcome. There was something that at any rate appeared to be touchingly genuine about his simple certainty of a joyful reception at the hands of relatives, to whom his forgotten existence meant the loss of everything that is considered to be worth having. Or was Lawrence right, and was this very queer Bassett a monomaniac suffering from a not uncommon kind of delusion? Against this, also, appearances contended. The man's story, though vague, was obviously neither vague nor broken to the man's own mind. Could he be a real Uncle Rayner, and could his story be not only vague, but true?

"I want to be kind," said the impostor, madman, uncle, whichever he might be. "The family hasn't treated me well; but I'm the family now, so I can afford to let bygones be bygones. And after all it wasn't you that was to blame in the old affair, seeing that you were but an unborn first cousin once removed to my poor nephew Mordaunt; things might have been different if they hadn't been as they were, I mean everybody to be good friends all round."

Meanwhile Sir Charles, little thinking of the new surprise that lay in store for him, rode slowly homewards from an aimless drive, endeavouring, as usual, to look over the edges of his enemies' cards. He had contrived a theory that would account for everything, in the most perfect manner, when he invented, and Stanislas Adrianski confirmed, the existence, theft, and probable destruction of a will. But then this would mean defeat, unless the destroyed will

could be restored; and the more he thought matters over, the stronger grew up the crop of difficulties in the way. Nor did he find the workings of his own mind in the least easier to follow because he obstinately refused to own that to write a will that ought to have been written by a dead man could possibly, under the extreme and exceptional circumstances of the case, deserve a bad name. This, though it really covered the whole difficulty, did not seem so difficult as the choice of a testator, the terms in which the will should be drawn, and the preparation of a story to account for its temporary loss, in case a story should be required. That the man calling himself Doyle would be perfectly aware of the fraud mattered little; two could play at the game of capping frauds, and only one could win. Why had he not spent all these years in searching Cautleigh Hall, inch by inch, in order to find a will that had never been found elsewhere? He might have saved himself from half a lifetime of suspense, and now, from the discomfort of having to commit, for the sake of right and justice, what the law, in its sweeping and indiscriminate way, refuses to call anything but a crime.

It was with a view of meeting his host, and of giving him what might prove to be a very needful warning, that Lawrence had set out towards the lodge, and his friendly interest in the reigning branch of the family was rewarded by the time he reached the middle of the long drive.

"I've left my friend Ralph in queer company," said he. "There's an escaped lunatic with him who says he's his long-lost great-uncle, just come from the moon. I thought you'd better know, because——"

His "because" was broken by a look on the face of Sir Charles that unmistakably showed him how right he had been to carry the news, if only by way of warning.

Sir Charles Bassett was not the less startled because for more than twenty years he had been dreading—for months past dreading—some such blow, but rather the more.

A letter from the claimant's lawyer, even from the claimant himself, would not have startled him into anything but action. But this sudden visit was the last thing he had looked for, although it confirmed his worst fears. Terribly right he had been in guessing that Phoebe's sudden flight would be followed by the catastrophe; but he



had never guessed that it would be so soon. Terribly well had Doyle and his daughter played their cards. They had not given him time to turn round. It looked as if they, having a personal knowledge of such things, had foreseen the possibility of being met with a, say restored will, against which forgers and will-burners could not venture to contend. There was no time for a counter-stroke of forgery now. Why had he not wrung that girl's neck, instead of merely trying to read her hand and overlook her cards? Why had he not gone to work boldly in trying to make up a match between the rightful heiress and the wrongful heir? Better a hundred times that Ralph should be the son-in-law of an Uncle Rayner and the husband of a girl who was obviously no better than she should be, than that he should lose Cautleigh Hall.

But he had too long been in the habit of covering a faint heart with a brave face to make the recovery of his countenance a hard matter.

"A madman?" asked he. "And calling himself Rayner Bassett?"

Lawrence had said nothing about the madman's having given himself any name. But he took care to notice Sir Charles's slip into a betrayal of particular knowledge of what a madman would be likely to do.

"Calling himself Sir Rayner Bassett of Cautleigh Hall."

"Thank you, Mr. Lawrence, for letting me know. He is no doubt a lunatic, as you say; but lunatics can make themselves almost as troublesome as if they were sane. He has seen Ralph, then?"

"They were together when I left them."

Sir Charles swore—under his breath, but not quite so much below as to be unheard. Of all people on earth Ralph was the last whom he would wish Uncle Rayner to see. Had this also been planned? And he was beginning to feel conscious that his behaviour under Lawrence's eyes had not merely been that of a man who disliked a half-hour's trouble with a madman before the keepers arrived. But, like a man of sense, he was not long in making up his mind that to tell Lawrence a little more than the latter was likely to guess would be the best way of stopping his guessing before it went too far.

"I'll tell you at once what makes me uncomfortable about what you've told me," said he. "There certainly was a Rayner Bassett, an uncle of mine, who might have

been Sir Rayner Bassett at this moment if he had not gone to the dogs and been devoured by them long ago. As you may suppose, I and my lawyers convinced ourselves of his death before Ralph was born. And I have no more belief in his existence now than in that of Prester John. But he has left a splendid game for an impostor to play. He left here when a young man—under a cloud. No member of the family now lives who ever saw him. The man who pumped the real Rayner—and I should say that his associates were not likely to have a grain of honesty among the lot of them—would be safe to know more about the past family history than any of us could ever have known if it were true, or could contradict if it were not true—much less disprove. The man who knew the real Rayner best was an old farmer whose name he forged, and he died some fifteen years ago. So you see, though there's no real cause for alarm, there's likely to be trouble."

"Can't you prove the real man's death?"

"If we could there would have been no game for an impostor to play. I hope, with all my heart, you're right, and that he's merely a madman. That won't trouble me at all."

He had been walking his horse, ostensibly to keep pace with Lawrence; really, in order to gain thinking time. But his real reason had not helped him much by the time that he reached the library-door. He would have to trust to his wits, as they might be spurred by the moment, after all, and recent events had considerably weakened his trust in them. One thing there was to quicken them—that he must not let Ralph guess the possibility of a question as to the strength of the position. Whatever he might have to do, Ralph must fight fair.

He looked for the burly form of Jack Doyle as he entered, and saw—the admiral. The sight took him aback; but things might not be so black after all, if the enemy had contented himself with sending merely an envoy and representative, and such an envoy.

"My dear nephew!" exclaimed the admiral, coming forward with both hands outstretched as before; "I fancy you're surprised to see me! You little guessed that the humble copying clerk, whom you used to give half-crowns to in Gray's Inn, was your own Uncle Rayner in disguise. But he was, and he knew it too, all the



time. But bless my soul, how you are changed; you're a regular man, and the father of a son that does you credit, I'm sure."

"What idiotic farce is this?" asked Sir Charles, able to take high ground; "of course I remember you. You are Horatio Collingwood Nelson, who used to do odd jobs for Messrs. Mark and Simple, of Gray's Inn Square. I suppose you have brought me some message from them, and have been drinking on the way."

"On the honour of an Associated Robespierre—of a gentleman, Sir Charles—nephew, I mean—I'm your Uncle Rayner, come as in duty bound, as the father of a family, to ask for what's his own. And depend upon it, I'm not going to be hard on a blood relation that's given me many a half-crown when such things were scarcer than, thank the Lord, they've been for many a day. I've been telling my great-nephew there the whole story from beginning to end, and——"

"And you must tell it to my father," said Ralph firmly; "whatever is right, be sure he will do."

"Tell it then," said Sir Charles; "I am prepared to hear anything that my son thinks I ought to hear. There, go on."

"Thank you, Sir Charles—Nephew Charles, I mean. Maybe I shall get to call you Charley in time, but it's difficult to begin all at the beginning, you see. You know who your Uncle Rayner was, I dare say?"

"Yes. A discreditable relation who committed forgery. Well?"

"If you please," said the admiral with an easy wave of the hand, "we'll let bygones be bygones about that little affair. I assure you I've forgiven and forgotten that years and years ago. I was a very ill-used man; and if you knew all the rights and the wrongs and the ins and the outs, as you will some day, you'd agree with me, and you'll be sorry you didn't, some day. I was more sinned against than sinning; and so we'll say no more about it. I promise you I won't for one. You used to be a bit of a lawyer, like me, though in a different branch of the profession, and I'll prove my identity with your poor lost uncle without the ghost of a flaw. I was so disgusted, you see, with the behaviour of my relations, and particularly with that of a certain farmer who carried persecution to the length of a warrant, that I went to the length of changing my name."

"And became Horatio Collingwood

Nelson? A strange name for a criminal, trying to hide from justice, to choose."

"Not all at once, Sir—nephew, I mean. There was a young woman, you see—there mostly is, you know—and she was an expensive one. I don't mind telling you that I should never have needed to raise money, in what I must own was a somewhat unusual manner, if it hadn't been for her. The passion of that woman for me was something beyond the common—absolutely tragic in its intensity. Why, sir, when I wasn't able to give her any more presents, that devoted woman insisted on giving me the presents and things that other people gave to her. Of anything more touching than such a proof of love as that I never heard—poor thing!"

"And you took them?" asked Sir Charles.

"Of course I took them. I never had the heart to disappoint a woman. And her gratitude was such that when I asked her to marry me she positively jumped at the offer. Marriage was a sort of necessity, you see; she was on the boards, and just the sort of girl to make twenty pounds a week. Stella Fitzjames, that was her name."

"Stella Fitzjames!" exclaimed Sir Charles. It was the very name he had heard given to the mother of Jack Doyle's daughter, at The Old Grey Mare.

"And, of course, seeing that we should have to look to live on her earnings and presents and things for a time, it was necessary I should have a proper legal right to whatever she came by—those actresses are slippery customers now and then, even the best of them. But then I couldn't—seeing that the police were out after me about that unfortunate circumstance—marry in my own name. So what did the clever creature do but get a young fellow that was sweet upon her to buy her a marriage license in his name, and when he went off to see his papa and mamma, we became Mr. and Mrs. Doyle. You may see our handwritings in the register of Helmforth parish church any day you please."

"I see. After robbing a foolish woman of her wages, you tricked her into a false marriage in order to keep your hold. What next, Mr. Nelson?"

So he spoke; but his words had very little reference to his thoughts—except so far as he knew that, if this were really his uncle, he was nephew to a knave so simple as not to know himself for a knave.

"I didn't tell you that story of the girl by way of a brag," said the admiral modestly, "but only to account for my coming to be called Nelson. You see, after the breeze blew by, Stella and I didn't get on like what we expected. I was a gentleman, you see, and she was never quite a lady. She didn't find herself able to keep me, and my unfortunate position made it impossible for me to keep her. Never marry off the boards, my dear great-nephew; you'll repent it, as sure as you're alive. What came to her I don't quite rightly know, but I took a friend's advice—always take a friend's advice, my dear great-nephew—and it was as clear as daylight that I was no more married to Stella than you are. It was fortunate, for there was a good woman ready to give me a helping hand, and she made me the best of wives while she lived, poor thing. The worst she ever did was to give me such a lot of boys, and the next worst was to die. She was but a laundress, as you know, sir, when you gave her charge of that little girl; but she was as good as gold, and she got me copying to do for Mark and Simple, whom she used to do for. And—that's all. I called myself Nelson, I don't know why, and Horatio and Collingwood seemed to come."

If that were the story, Sir Charles had been conjuring up a false picture of the terrible Rayner Bassett, indeed, in place of a natural cad who, instead of strongly sinning, had let himself drift down and down, so as to lose the last remnant of family likeness in speech, face, and bearing, until a passing wave of better fortune had made him the husband and pensioner of a decent washerwoman. The man who could weakly invent, still more the man who could weakly relate, such a tale, could surely never have had strength enough to invent and stand by a good strong lie. Was the real Doyle the real wire-puller, even now? But of that, a very simple test was at hand.

"That is not all, sir," said Sir Charles coldly. "Did you ever see the Doyle in whose name you went through the form of marriage with Stella Fitzjames? No? Then I tell you that I know him, that he was present in my chambers in Gray's Inn when that little girl was found. Nay, I know where to find him, and he will tell me whether you, or he, was the husband of Miss Fitzjames. He has a daughter, whom I believe to be that woman's child; she was staying in this house not long ago."

"Bless my soul!" cried the admiral, "she's no more his child, on my word of honour, than she's mine. Why, the girl who calls herself Miss Doyle is Marion Eve Psyche Zenobia Dulcibella Jane, the identical little girl whom the nurse-girl handed up into your chambers that night at Gray's Inn, no less and no more."

"And whose death you announced to me, in a letter signed with your name. Mr. Nelson, you are losing yourself in a labyrinth of lies. Be off with you for an impudent impostor, and never let me hear of you again."

For the moment he breathed more freely, though the sky had scarcely shown a sign of clearing, and while all other matters remained, if the rascal's story were true, much stranger than before.

The admiral stared, and tried to look fierce, but the habits of a life, and the nature of a coward, compelled him to obey. "I meant to be friends," he said, "but when you hear from my lawyers you'll sing another song. So good-day," he added quickly, as Sir Charles rang the bell.

"Well, father?" asked Ralph, as soon as he was gone.

"Well, what is there to say?"

"This, at any rate, that I'm sorry, when you were anxious I should be a workman, I chose to be an idler. You are right, I suppose, to throw him on his strict proofs, but I learned from him something that had no place in his story to you. Philip Nelson, the engineer, is this man's eldest son."

"Likely enough, that a thief should be the heir of a forger."

"Of a forger? In that case he is the heir of Sir Rayner Bassett, and Philip Nelson is no thief. There is some secret here, and—"

"Good Heaven, Ralph! What can you mean?"

"That we must give even the devil his due, even if his due be Cautleigh Hall. What else should I mean, or you?"

And then Sir Charles Bassett knew that the worst blow had fallen, that his only son suspected the whole truth, and that he would have to fight fair, and—lose. He could not meet his son's eyes, and seeing this, Ralph turned his eyes away.

At last Mrs. Hassock escaped from a not unwilling imprisonment in the alcove. She had lost the beginning of the scene, but not the end.

## LOST TREASURES.

SCIENTIFIC writers are fain to tell us that nothing is, or can be, lost in the universe. Things are subject, it is true, to transition, permutation, and extensive change, but they do not therefore cease to exist. Fire, doubtless, is responsible for a good deal; hundreds of precious and valuable objects have been destroyed in this manner, or so injured as to be past recognition. Rust, damp, and corrosion have much to answer for. Barbarian incursions and the ravage of great cities by the brutal and ignorant have irreparably destroyed much of the rare and the beautiful. But then again there are things of their own nature incorruptible, unchangeable, impervious to damp or weather-wear, or the decay of age. And such being the case, what a number of wonderful and curious treasures are no longer to be found of which history nevertheless has left us minute accounts, yet somehow have vanished from our ken, and which probably we would give anything to recover!

Then also there are fixed quantities of certain indestructible substances, such as gold, precious stones, and the like, which, however they may be changed by fire or other agencies, yet, for all that, can scarcely be lessened in bulk, dimension, or value. What a quantity of money, for instance, is unaccounted for! The considerable amount disinterred bears no appreciable proportion to the probable quantity coined—say since the patriarchal times, when Abraham weighed and paid down for the Cave of Machpelah in “shekels of the merchant.” Our Roman predecessors in this country certainly seem to have sown their fields and gardens broadcast with the contents of their purses; but all that has been or ever will be discovered can be but a fraction of the money they circulated in Britain. And where is the rest of it?

But to descend from the general to the particular, as the logicians say, there must be a good many curious things still existent, though not extant, if only we could ascertain their whereabouts. There is the seven-branched candlestick of the Jewish Temple, which is figured on the arch of Titus as having formed part of the spoils of his triumph. It is said to have been cast over the Milvian Bridge into the turbid waters of the Tiber. But on this, as on so many other matters, the learned and antiquarian fiercely join issue. We therefore presume not to offer the slightest humble opinion,

save that if it is there, it is the duty of the municipality, or some other body, to search for and recover it in the interests of the world, or what is the use of a new government of Rome?

Think, alas! what a number of priceless books have been lost by fire, or malicious and barbarian stupidity. It is said that at least two hundred thousand MS. books were burnt in that terrible fire (423 B.C.) which consumed the very navy of Alexandria, as Baronius tells us. The remnant that escaped were placed by Cleopatra in a library within the Temple of Serapis. Is there a single leaf extant now?

Much antique statuary, rare and admirable, remains to us, but where does that Gnidian Venus lie hidden, the matchless handiwork of Praxiteles, with which a certain youth was so love-stricken that he lost his very senses? The Colossus of Rhodes was seventy cubits high, the masterpiece of Chares of Lindum. It stood upright for sixty-six years, and then fell in mighty ruin, caused by the shock of an earthquake. Having been consecrated to the Sun, the brass of which it was founded was held sacred, and so it remained until the Mahometan conquest of Rhodes, when nine hundred camels were loaded with the brazen spoils of the famous image, and quietly carried them all away. In the Golden House of Nero, at Rome, hard by the Colosseum, was his own Colossus one hundred and twenty feet high, and modelled to resemble him; some say that a huge hand is still extant at Rome, the sole remnant of this mighty statue.

When the library of Constantine was burnt by Leo the Isaurian, at Constantinople, there is said to have perished the intestine of a dragon (?) one hundred and twenty feet long, on which was written the whole of the Iliad and the Odyssey in letters of gold.

The rabbis tell us that the rod of Moses had been carved by Adam out of a tree in Eden, that Noah bequeathed it to Shem, that it descended to Abraham; that Isaac gave it to Jacob; that during his stay in Egypt he gave it to Joseph, and it became the possession of Moses. Tradition has no more to tell us either of that or of the Tables of the Law, which were shattered on Mount Sinai, or of the Ark of the Covenant itself, save that when King Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, the Prophet Jeremiah took the Ark and the Tables of the Law, and the other sacred relics, and hid them in a cleft of Mount Sinai, where, the

Talmudists add, one day he will reappear to point them out. The rock-hewn Tables of the Law are indestructible in themselves, somewhere hidden therefore, but still existing, they must be. Will they ever return to the custody of the House of Israel? Where, too, are the stones of the High Priest's breastplate, each engraved with the name of one of the twelve tribes? They cannot perish. We have stones in our possession of a far older date, signets and rings of Nimrod and Erech and Sennacherib and others. Is it not strange that these incomparably more precious engraved gems have past away from sight, to which so awful and mystic a significance attached? Yet so it is. These rare and sacred and most venerable relics are among the irreparable and lamentable losses the chosen people have sustained. Where is that seal of Solomon concerning which the Talmud and the Arabian Nights relate such wonders? It had power, so the Jews affirm, to seal and unloose the genii or bind them in captivity. Its owner was potent to understand the language of the birds and beasts. We have recovered the seal of Uzziah deep down in the foundations of Jerusalem, but if our explorers had lit upon Solomon's, how much more to the purpose it would have been!

When Roderick, last of the Gothic kings of Spain, was driven from his kingdom by the Saracens, he was possessed, so the chroniclers affirm, of a table made of a single enormous emerald. Yet this treasure, so unique and so precious, vanishes from history in that year, and has never been heard of since.

A Greek artificer, named Mynicides, made an ivory chariot with four wheels and four horses, which a fly could cover with her wings; rivalling this, we wot of a little ship made by one Whitehead, an English workman, as Schottus relates in his *Itinerary*, a like marvel of minuteness. It moved on a table by itself, rowers plying the oars, a woman on deck playing on a lute, while a puppy barked at her side. We should like to have seen either. In Elizabethan times one Mark Scaliot constructed a lock of eleven pieces of iron, steel, and brass, and a chain of forty-three golden links was attached to the same, and this being put round a flea's neck, lock and chain and flea weighed only a grain and a half of gold. Surely such a miracle of skill was worth preserving for posterity. Oswald Nothingerus once turned one thousand six hundred dishes of ivory which

all went into a peppercorn, if indeed we may believe contemporary writers. They were shown to Pope Paul the Fifth, who counted and verified them himself, by the aid of a magnifying-glass. Father Ferrarius, a Jesuit, would not be outdone, and he made twenty-five wooden cannon, which went into the same compass; and Simon Marolus—whoever he was—had one of these miniature wonders in his possession, and was very proud of it. What did he do with it? Friar Bacon, as we all know, had a brazen head, which answered questions, and so also had another necromancer in the time of Richard the First. And Stephen of Anjou sent to consult this head, which we are told “had a spirit enclosed.” “Shall I never see Richard, my king?” questioned Stephen, and the head replied “No.” “Shall I then continue in my office?” “Yea, to thy life's end,” was the answer. “Where then shall I die?” “In Plumâ.” And in effect, so the story goes on to relate, Stephen died not in his bed, as he might have anticipated, but in the Castle of Pluma, at least if we may believe the *Polychronicon* (fol. 296). One wonders who dared to keep or to destroy a head, which though brazen, spoke so much to the purpose.

Is that copper globe in existence anywhere, sixteen feet in diameter, which was once shown at Gottorp? Ten people could sit inside and survey the motions of the heavenly bodies projected in some manner within the sphere. And what has become of that wonderful mechanical eagle, made by Regiomontanus, of Nuremberg, which flew to meet and salute the Emperor Maximilian, and then returned to await his entry at the city gate? The same artificer made an iron fly, which would flutter about the room and then settle on its master's shoulder. There are no such flies and eagles now.

There was also a plastic statue moulded by Gremiburgius, which, by a masterly arrangement of acoustics, could speak plainly. What an alarming companion in a room it must have been. Raphael wrote “a century of sonnets,” as Mr. Browning tells us in one of his poems:

Wrote them with the silver-dinted pencil,  
Else he only used to draw madonnas.

Dying at thirty-three, the precious volume passed into the hands of Guido Réni, his pupil and friend, who bequeathed it to the City of Bologna.

“Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.” We have other tiny scraps



from Raphael's note-book, scrawled over with verses from his hand; these we treasure; but what would we not give to recover the lost volume in its completeness? And also for that figure of an angel drawn by Dante, as he tells us in the *Vita Nuova*.

"In there came some people of importance. Then," says Dante, "did I leave my angel." The poet's picture and the painter's poems—beyond the purchase of wealth in value, and both are lost.

At Leghorn there was once a clock which set in motion a company of shepherds, some of whom played on pipes, while the others danced singly or in couples, "to the ravishment," as we read, "of all beholders."

No recent tourist or traveller has lit upon this, yet one may be allowed to wonder what has become of it. Where is the silver sphere sent by the Emperor Ferdinand to Sultan Solymán. Paulus Jovius relates that sixteen men could scarce carry it, and it declared all the planetary motions. What has the Turk done with it?

Although, indeed, it is possible that in the treasure chambers of oriental potentates many rare and forgotten curiosities lie concealed, stored up in the dim recesses of palaces unknown and unvisited by inquisitive western eyes. And anent this an anecdote recurs to the writer, of a picture of Morland's, known to have been engraved, and only three plates to have been extant. Two of these were accounted for, the third was missing. The owner of the picture had a son, an officer in the army, then occupied with the Chinese War, and the taking of the famous Summer Palace. This young man found in the innermost recess of a joss house the missing print, which, could it have related its own adventures, might have explained the fashion in which rare things lapse out of sight, and remain as we observed, existent, not extant.

But we must conclude with a passing expression of regret for the wonderful mechanical aviary once owned by Ippolito D'Este, Cardinal of Ferrara. Set in motion by curiously contrived hydraulics, the birds sat upon the trees, and clapped their wings and sang melodiously and long, until a great owl flew out and silenced them—a mechanical owl like the rest, and the work of Claudius Gallus.

But then to set against the long tale of our losses, Mr. Rassam has, or believes he has, discovered the very ark of stork in which Noah, as Berosus assures us, de-

posited the records of the antique world before the Deluge. At any rate the cylinders have been despatched by him to the British Museum. And if this "find" be what he imagines, it will go a long way in compensation for the missing treasures we have been describing, and make us thankful that the Found bears some proportion to the Lost.

#### SUNSHINE.

BROAD and bright the sunshine,  
On the terrace lay,  
Touching with an equal ray,  
In equal gladness to illumine  
Violet bed and yew tree's gloom.  
Yet within the silent room,  
Dinily rose the day.

Merrily the sunshine,  
Caught the upper pane,  
But as yet it strove in vain,  
With its glitter to surprise  
The yearning in the lady's eyes,  
Who, lonely, 'neath the sweet spring skies,  
Fought life's long fret and strain.

Lower crept the sunshine,  
Down the lattice tall,  
Till it saw its radiance fall,  
All along the silent floor,  
Past the heavy close-shut door,  
Through the room that knew no more  
Light step, or cheery call.

The triumphant sunshine,  
Flooding all it saw,  
Laughed at last her gaze to draw,  
From where the phantoms of the past,  
An eternal shadow cast;  
And her glances fell at last,  
As in breathless awe,

Where the glorious sunshine,  
Danced, and shone, and glowed,  
Where the treasured picture showed  
The tall cross that stood above  
All her best of life and love,  
And 'mid her bitter sorrow strove  
To point the higher road.

"And," said the happy sunshine,  
"Oh, heavy eyes that mourn,  
Oh, heart, from its chief moorings torn,  
Look at the joy with which He dowers  
The wakening earth, and budding flowers;  
Trust to the God of sunny hours,  
Nor dare in grief's keen scorn,

"To turn away from sunshine;  
Nor in the sense of loss,  
With reckless hand aside to toss,  
The comforting through Nature given,  
The trials of our way to leaven.  
See how the brightest glean from heaven  
Clings longest round the cross."

#### THE SERJEANT'S BOOK.

##### IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

SERJEANT BALLANTINE is a firm believer in his order, and has probably been a good deal influenced in the unfavourable opinion he expresses in regard to Lord Campbell, by a sneer at the members of Serjeants' Inn, which is to be found, among a good many other ill-natured things, in that



distinguished judge's diary. There is, indeed, something peculiarly exasperating about the indescribably complacent self-confidence with which Lord Campbell, at that time striking the stars with his sublime head as Lord Chief Justice, patronises all those on lower steps of the ladder of promotion. He had dined twice only at the inn (of which the judges as well as the serjeants were members) when he recorded his opinion that "My brethren of the bench are a most respectable set. I believe them to be superior to their predecessors who filled their places fifty years ago." As Serjeant Ballantine remarks, "By some process of self-exaltation, Lord Campbell upon more occasions than this has apparently assumed that the puisnés were a kind of inferior beings to himself," but it is strange to find even Lord Campbell writing in this half-contemptuous way of a body of judges which included such men as Mr. Justice Coleridge, Mr. (afterwards Chief) Justice Erle, Mr. Justice Maule, and others. As for the serjeants, Lord Campbell had but a poor opinion of them. "They are a very degenerate race," he says flatly. Serjeant Shee, Serjeant Hayes, Serjeant Pigott, all afterwards judges, were among the degenerates, and Serjeant Ballantine mentions other men of eminence and conspicuous ability, whom Lord Campbell tarred with the same brush.

Thus it is not surprising that Serjeant Ballantine should look with but little favour on Lord Campbell, but in truth that distinguished judge knew how to make himself thoroughly unpopular and disliked if ever a man did. Of great ability, unwearied perseverance, and indomitable energy, he made his way to the top of the tree without much regard for the feelings of those whom he pushed aside, or over whose head he climbed, and, whether at the bar, or in the arena of politics, let it be seen a little too plainly that, in his estimation, the first person to be looked after was John Campbell. The criticisms of his contemporaries naturally affected a man of his temperament but little. He knew what he wanted and he got it, being content to let other people talk, so long as the solid pudding fell to him. And if he did not concern himself with the feelings of his brethren at the bar, while he was pushing his way through their ranks to the front, still less did he care to conciliate them when he had reached the bench.

Serjeant Ballantine is very severe, but not unduly so it would seem, on his harsh

and irritable temper, and on his want of patience—one of the first and most indispensable qualities for a judge—and draws a biting contrast between the "high-minded feeling and heartfelt courtesy" of Lord Denman, and the "superficial veneer of forced politeness, that concealed the natural bad taste and peevish temper" of Campbell, who succeeded him as Lord Chief Justice. The Serjeant's severity in this instance is the more marked, in that it is almost the only case in his genial and good-tempered book in which any one is spoken of with anything like real harshness. Campbell's irritability took at times an absolutely grotesque form. The Serjeant remarks that, "Upon one occasion, during the speech of a very able counsel, now a judge, after many signs of irritability, his lordship could no longer keep his seat, but getting up, marched up and down the bench, casting at intervals the most furious glances at the imperturbable counsel, and at last, folding his arms across his face, leant as if in absolute despair against the wall, presenting a not inconsiderable amount of back surface to the audience."

By an odd coincidence, a story of Mr. Justice Wightman is printed on the page opposite to the one on which this instance of Campbell's irritability is given, and points the opposite moral. A learned counsel had been arguing before a Kentish jury at Maidstone at considerable length when the judge dryly interposed with "Mr. —, you have stated that before," and then pausing for a moment, added, "but you may have forgotten it, it was a very long time ago." This would have infinitely more effect on counsel and jury alike than Lord Campbell's absurd proceedings.

But even Lord Campbell could be polite in court, with such politeness as we can expect a cat to show to a mouse, and this "was amusingly illustrated by a remark made by the crier of the court at the commencement of this, 'the Palmer,' case. His lordship had said with great suavity of manner, 'Let the prisoner be accommodated with a chair.' 'He means to hang him,' said the crier." This has, however, been observed of other judges, and it was said, at the time of the Tichborne perjury trial, that the studied politeness with which Sir Alexander Cockburn treated the Claimant augured very ill for the fat impostor.

Four distinguished lawyers have filled the office of Lord Chief Justice of England during Serjeant Ballantine's career, Lords

Tenterden, Denman, and Campbell, and Sir Alexander Cockburn. We have seen what the Serjeant thinks of Campbell. Of Lord Tenterden the recollection is faint, and he only comes before us in a sentence as a "sour old man with the manners of a pedagogue." Of Lord Denman the Serjeant speaks with profound respect, but it is for Cockburn that he shows the greatest appreciation, and it is undoubtedly Cockburn who is the most interesting figure of the quartette. To singularly acute and brilliant intellectual faculties he added unflagging industry and that unwearied capacity for taking pains which has been sometimes described as genius, while, to aid in giving effect to a great store of legal learning, he had at command all the resources of an accomplished scholar in many and varied departments of literature as well as of a shrewd and cultivated man of the world. As advocate, parliamentary debater, and judge he made a lasting mark upon the general history of his time, and his popularity in society will ensure for him as well the sort of reputation which lives in memoirs and good stories. As an advocate the Serjeant accords him a high, if not the highest, place, and judges him to have been the equal of any one whom he had ever heard at the bar. His capacity for mastering complicated facts and his powers of impassioned oratory are dwelt upon even with enthusiasm, and it is easy to understand how rarely fitted he was for the profession of an advocate, when it is considered that to these two great gifts, which rarely indeed go together, he added a singularly melodious voice, an easy grace of manner, and a face which, as the Serjeant remarks, although decidedly plain, had when smiling a peculiar charm. Of the famous cases in which Cockburn was engaged, two, of which the Serjeant gives interesting details, are those of M'Naghten in 1843, and Palmer in 1856. In the former, the prisoner had murdered a gentleman named Drummond, evidently under the belief that he was Sir Robert Peel, who had been the selected victim, and Cockburn defended. The ground of the defence set up was that of insanity, and succeeded, Cockburn's speech being described as "one of the most masterly arguments ever heard at the English bar." The latter, which will always be remarkable as one of the most important cases of poisoning ever tried before an English jury, set the seal on Cockburn's reputation as an

advocate. Never was a prosecution conducted in a more masterly manner, and never did counsel, though with scrupulous fairness, weave a more terrible net of circumstance round a guilty man. "The riding did it," said Palmer himself after the verdict was delivered, and no doubt the "riding did it" to a very large extent, but it is also very clear from the full report of the trial that Lord Campbell had a good deal to do with the result—a fact of which Palmer was also well aware, for in the course of the proceedings (the story is not told in the Serjeant's book) he sent down to one of those engaged in the case a note in which he had at first written, "I should like to give old Campbell two grains of strychnine," afterwards altering the two to three, as if he had thought, on reconsideration, that "old Campbell" was an extra tough subject.

Of Cockburn as a judge the Serjeant does not speak so highly, for the reason that he never altogether lost the habit of advocacy, and allowed his impressionable nature too frequently to bias him to this side or to that, and there is no doubt that the criticism is to some extent just. But that he was an almost ideal judge in his manner of presiding over his court, in his courteous treatment of witnesses and juries, as well as in his relations with the bar, no one who ever had occasion to visit the Court of Queen's Bench in his time would venture to dispute.

Many other distinguished lawyers of the present and the past come before us in the pleasant pages of the Serjeant's book either as finished portraits, or as sketches, but it is time to return to the Serjeant himself and to some of the more important cases with which his name is more particularly associated. Of course, the most interesting of these, to the present generation, at all events, is that of that "unhappy nobleman," the Tichborne claimant, of whose career before the courts the Serjeant gives a very graphic account, and whose interests in the trial before Lord Chief Justice Bovill were entrusted to his care. "It is not my intention in the following pages to express any opinion upon the truth or falsehood of the present romance," says the Serjeant in introducing the subject, but it is not difficult to see really what he thinks about it, and indeed, he indicates the weak points, the improbabilities if not impossibilities of the claimant's case, with a precision and clearness which show pretty plainly what a hopeless task he must have felt that before

him when he opened his case. The Serjeant gives a strange account of the surroundings of the trial, which he describes as a series of "morning performances" rather than a sober legal enquiry, and it is odd to read of Sir William Bovill on the bench, surrounded by a bevy of ladies, from some of whom he "occasionally accepted advice," on matters connected with geography and the French language, the Serjeant opines, "in which it was early shown that he had not been thoroughly grounded."

Another of the Serjeant's causes célèbres, to which its political interest gives peculiar importance, was his defence of the Gaekwar of Baroda for attempting to poison Colonel Phayre, the British Resident, with arsenic and finely-powdered diamond dust, and although he failed to persuade the majority of the Commissioners, before whom the case was tried, of the innocence of his client, he is apparently convinced of it himself. This is the more noticeable in that he does not appear to have been inclined to put much faith in his clients as a rule. As he himself dryly puts it, "I suppose few counsel have defended more accused persons than myself, and I must allow that innocence was not the characteristic feature of the majority of my clients." Indeed, both as counsel for the prosecution and for the defence, the Serjeant was concerned with an extraordinary number of strange figures in the history of the law courts of his time, either on the criminal or civil side, and stories such as those of Risk Allah, Madame Rachel, the Matlock will case, the extraordinary death of Miss Hills, and the fatal mistake which was so nearly made in the Pellizoni case, are scattered up and down the Serjeant's two volumes in almost bewildering profusion.

Little less interesting than the stories of legal battle which the Serjeant has to tell, are his remarks on the weapons with which the barrister should, so to speak, be equipped, and on the proper mode of using them, and his views on cross-examination are of especial value as coming from so subtle a master of the art. "The object of cross-examination," it is tersely put, "is not to produce startling effects, but to elicit facts which will support the theory intended to be put forward." Skilfully used it is a valuable means of ascertaining the truth, but the barrister who merely cross-examines without having definite views of his own, and merely on the chance at getting something of which he can make

use out of a witness, is pretty sure to come to grief. The number of questions asked is no test of the value of a cross-examination. Sir William Follett is reported to have asked singularly few questions, while, on the other hand, the Serjeant has "heard many cross-examinations from others listened to with rapture by an admiring client, each question of which has been destruction to his case." To be successful in this branch of his business a barrister must not only be capable of forming a decided opinion on the facts of a case, and of addressing himself to dealing with them logically and clearly, but he must also learn to judge of the characters and probable motives of the witnesses with whom he has to deal. His success will largely depend on the result of this diagnosis. Honest witnesses, the Serjeant thinks, are inclined to keep to the facts they have to prove, and intending perjurers endeavour to distract the attention of counsel by introducing irrelevant matter, but here again much discernment is necessary on the part of the cross-examiner (and in a lesser degree on the part of the jury too), for embarrassment at the novelty of the position or constitutional nervousness will often confuse the evidence of a perfectly truthful witness. There is no doubt that matters in this regard have improved much of late years, and that most advocates have learnt that to bully a witness under the disguise of cross-examination is not to secure the sympathies of the jury; but there are still too many learned gentlemen to be found in the Courts of Westminster (not to mention the "Central Court"), who mistake, as the Serjeant has it, "noise for energy," and lay themselves open to the rebuke which Baron Alderson once gave to one of those professional bullies. "Mr.—, you seem to think that the art of cross-examination is to examine crossly."

Naturally the Serjeant does not look with favour on cross-examination as it is understood and practised in the Courts of Equity, pronouncing it, indeed, to be "ludicrous," with, "however, the merit of being thoroughly inoffensive," and opining that the incontestable "acuteness and argumentative powers of the judges and practitioners in the Equity Courts" would be much assisted "if the examination of witnesses were less of a sham." The point is illustrated by two good stories, one of which the Serjeant tells of an experienced equity judge who once said in relation to a question of the Serjeant's in cross-examina-

tion, "Really this is a long way from the point," to be neatly met with the retort, "I am aware of that, my lord; if I were to begin any nearer, the witness would discover my object;" and the other of the late Lord Hatherley, which in the Serjeant's words run thus: "I was counsel before him, and had to cross-examine a very plausible but certainly not truthful witness. I did so with some severity, and I imagine that I should have been successful before a jury. His lordship, however, was of a different opinion, and was much struck with the ingenuousness of the young man, and he evidently thought that he had been exposed to a cruel ordeal. As the witness himself was going out of court, he was heard to whisper to a friend, 'Why the old gent believed every word I swore!'" The Tichborne case might have been strangled in its birth in the Court of Chancery if the equity barrister engaged had only cross-examined at once as to the famous tattoo marks, as, after the proof of the existence of the tattooing on the real Roger and its absence from the skin of the sham one, neither the solicitor nor the counsel concerned for the claimant would, in the Serjeant's opinion, have consented to go on with the case. Indeed, the fusion of law and equity does not at all commend itself to the Serjeant's mind, and even the most eager law-reformers must admit that there is a good deal in his arguments. Admitting the extraordinary power and ability exhibited by such men as Bethell, Roundell Palmer, Cairns, Jessel, and others, he still thinks them out of place in a criminal court. Their education has been very different to that of the judge who is promoted to the bench from among barristers who have all their lives dealt with criminal law. The equity judge has passed his life in studying his cases from affidavits; in dealing, not with witnesses direct, but with evidence carefully prepared by solicitors; his arguments have been of necessity such as would commend themselves to refined and intellectual minds. Such falsehood and fraud as have come before him have been more or less disguised, have been at all events presented with some show of decency. To the almost brutalised habits of many of the people who figure in criminal courts whether as prisoners, prosecutors, or witnesses, he is an utter stranger. "Can this be an appropriate preparation," the Serjeant very pertinently asks, "for a man to be placed upon a judgment seat, facing a dock, with the very form of which he is

unacquainted, and called upon to deal with a fellow-creature's life, upon materials of which he is by practice absolutely ignorant?" Nor is it pleasant to reflect that in the event of a prisoner being without counsel, and being defended, at the request of the judge, by some learned gentleman not encumbered with business, as constantly happens, a man's life, with possible perjury among the witnesses, might be "dependent upon the practical knowledge of an equity judge, assisted by a junior counsel."

The inequality of sentences, the inadequacy of the punishments too often inflicted on criminals convicted of offences of violence, the necessity of better protection of the police in the discharge of their duty, the desirability of the establishment of a court of appeal in criminal cases, and the question of the value of the evidence of scientific experts, are all matters of general as well as of legal interest which will be found carefully discussed in the Serjeant's book, but which can only be mentioned in this place. The anecdotal side of the Serjeant's reminiscences is that with which we are mainly concerned, and there is a whole gallery of portraits still waiting for such notice as the space at our disposal can afford.

As has been before intimated, the Serjeant has by no means passed his time in the exclusive contemplation of "shop," but has availed himself of his opportunities for mixing in many different kinds of society. As a consequence he has a copious budget of good stories to tell about many of the most prominent men of his day, and his experiences as a man about town are no less interesting and amusing than those which are connected with his professional career. An essentially "clubbable" man, he has plenty to tell about the Union, which is evidently his favourite, the Portland, the Garrick, the Shakespeare, and about that best club of all in fact, though it was not so in name, Evans's. In common with all who were habitués of that cheery room as it existed in its purified days, the Serjeant has nothing but kindly thoughts and words for it and its frequenters. No such pleasures exist, no such pleasures one may almost say could exist nowadays as the simple joys of Evans's. It is not a case of outgrowing anything, this almost affectionate remembrance of the underground room which so many of us have. It is not that



we have grown older, wiser, maybe more foolish, or more exacting, and so cannot appreciate what delighted us in the consulship of Plancus. It is that Evans's, as it was some five-and-twenty years ago, represented a sort of life which would be impossible to-day. As an institution it grew up, blossomed, and died in the course of nature—the last, one may say, of the old tavern haunts. The entertainment was not wonderful—indeed, although the boys sang well enough, The Hardy Norseman and the Vilanelle from Marie Stuart became monotonous after some years' repetition, and the comic singers were excruciating—but then one did not go for the entertainment. In the café part of the room, which signified the end farthest from the platform, there was a nightly gathering of men whom it was good to see and to know, of men famous in almost all the walks of life, of men to whose memory the fast decreasing band of survivors looks back with a strange mixture of pleasure and of pain. And "Paddy" Green, most courteous of hosts, most affable of humbugs to intrusive strangers, frankest and most pleasant of talkers to those whom he knew and who knew him, most anecdotal of ex-chorus-singers, "Paddy" has long gone to the shades where chops and Welsh rarebits, glees and pints of stout are unknown. And even Herr von Joel, who was always to be retained upon the establishment in consequence of his past services, and who feebly sold cigars to the uninitiated, was discharged years ago by a greater power than Paddy's and has long been numbered with the extinct institutions of London, to be remembered for a time by a few faithful believers of Evans's, who have often listened to his whistling imitations of all things, which were like nothing, half persuading themselves that they must be good because they had heard them so often. Of Evans's and its frequenters the Serjeant, himself a well-known and frequent visitor, discourses pleasantly. If the members of the Falstaff Club, which now occupies the premises over which Paddy was wont to rule, have as good times as the Serjeant and some others who shall be nameless have had in the old days in the old room, they will not do ill.

Most generally interesting, perhaps, of the Serjeant's club recollections are those connected with the Garrick, and of some of its members he has some excellent stories

to tell. Dickens and Thackeray, Stanfield, David Roberts, Talfourd, Charles Kemble, Charles Kean, Keeley, Shirley Brooks, Douglas Jerrold, Albert Smith, Walter Lacy, and many more are on the list of the Garrick men whom the Serjeant knew. It is good company, that to which he introduces us. There is a vivid bit of description of Charles Kemble's later days in this chapter which strikes one oddly, so used is one to think of him only as the gay and gallant actor of whom dramatic tradition tells us. "He had become very deaf," the Serjeant writes, "and like many people suffering from that infirmity, used every endeavour to make himself hear. This was impossible, but others were fully informed of his thoughts; and as these were occasionally far from complimentary to the hearer, his presence latterly in the club was looked upon with some apprehension." A thoroughly characteristic story is one of Kean, one of whose foibles it was to imagine that everybody must be as much interested in his own quarrels as he was himself, and to look upon any of his friends who was even commonly civil to the enemy as something like a traitor. At the time in question he had a violent feud with Albert Smith, owing to some uncomplimentary criticism of the latter's, and the story runs: "One night I and a member named Arabin, the son of Mr. Serjeant Arabin, were talking with Albert Smith in the coffee-room. At the opposite side stood Charles Kean, scowling. Presently Albert departed. In about three strides Charles Kean reached us. 'Richard,' he said in the most tragic of voices, 'I never thought that you, my old schoolfellow, would have consorted with that viper!'" Another, almost equally good, has to do with another weak point of the tragedian, who is said to have rebuked an orange-woman at the theatre for the grievous misdemeanour of applauding Ryder, who was then playing with Kean, in these solemn terms: "Ungrateful wretch! Thou hast eaten of my bread and enjoyed the hospitality of my roof, how couldest thou applaud that man?"

It may be hinted that that "irregularity of mind" to which, as we have seen, the Serjeant elsewhere makes allusion, is rather conspicuous in the chapter on the Garrick. Whether the irregularity is to be laid to the door of the writer or of his printer is not evident, but Clarkson Stanfield certainly did not spell his name Stansfield, nor does a well-known actor and deservedly popular



member of the club call himself Walter Lacey, but, rather, Lacy, while "an artist by the name of, I believe, Haig," would have written his name by preference, Louis Haghe. But these and sundry vagaries on the part of the compiler of the index—who mixes up the Denmans, father and son, for instance—are of but little account, and do not in any way detract from the value of the book, which we cordially recommend our readers to procure and study for themselves.

### THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY.

To quote a tithe of the praises lavished upon the month of May by writers of all degrees and styles from the earliest periods of our literary history, would be to undertake a task which would very soon assume the proportions of a volume, and which no amount of condensation could reduce to the limits of an ordinary paper. And to attempt to do so is not our object, but rather to show that, notwithstanding the scepticism so prevalent about the actual existence of merrie England, we once were a merry people, and that the month of May was, in every sense of the word, essentially characteristic of the time of year. And it should be remembered by those who growl over recent experiences of wet Mays, who propound grave theories about the astonishing revolution that has taken place in our climate, and who hum and haw doubtfully about the old jollity of the month in general, and of May Day in particular, that the May Day of our ancestors was thirteen days later than the present calendrical first of May, a period of time during which considerable climatic changes can be wrought, occurring as it does just when two seasons diametrically opposed to one another in character, are struggling for the supremacy.

The grand sturdy Roman rule left other traces in our island than mere roads and ruins, and the industrious antiquarian may trace in more than one custom, fondly spoken of as "thoroughly English," the influence of that great régime which left an indelible print wherever it set its foot. Our Saxon forefathers called the month of May, "trimilki," from the fact that at this season they were first able to milk their kine thrice daily, after the long sleep of winter, but the name now used is probably derived from Maia, the brightest star of the Pleiades. At any rate, our English cele-

bration of the May season is evidently derived from the old Roman Floralia, and although our sturdy rustics probably knew nothing of the beautiful story of Zephyr wooing Flora and giving her, as dowry, dominion over the fruits and flowers of earth, the purely out-of-door character of their festival proves that there was lurking a genuine appreciation of the beauties of the new-born Nature. And, growl as we may at the too frequent inclemency of English May weather, when a typical day does come, we are bound to admit that it stands peerless and unapproached. The birds are busy nest-making, and, towards the middle of the month the young ones have already been hatched, fledged, and allowed to enjoy short flutters; the male birds are in full song, especially the cuckoo, whose note, after May, becomes hoarse; the pleasant vision of bee-swarms amongst the flowers is frequent, and at evening the glow-worm shows his tiny light. The meadows are spangled with buttercups, field-hyacinths, primroses, violets, cowslips, stellarias, pansies, and ragged robin. In the woods are the anemone, which "hangs its head and weeps when the sun goes down," the cranesbill or herb robert, the wood-sorrel, with its white pendent blossoms, woodruffs, and harebells. The blackthorn first appears in the hedges, followed by the whitethorn; the blossoms of plum, cherry, apple, and pear trees are brilliant in ordinary years, although this year the season is unusually forward; in gardens are the cynoglossum, veronica, blue harebell, and standard tulip. Still later the rich crimson of the peony and the light red of the monkey poppy are familiar in the fields; and, towards the end of the month, the blossoms fall from the trees, the grass in the meadows is high, and the nights, although still retaining a tinge of cold, are pleasant. We have not in May the stately calm beauty of summer, or the mature golden tints of autumn, but we have universal freshness and vigour; we cannot restrain the feelings of buoyancy and hopefulness, which, during the later seasons, give way to sentiment and reflection, somewhat shaded with sadness. And so thought the merry Englishmen of old days; and so, as we shall endeavour to show, they gave their thoughts full command over their actions. Nowadays our country folk, save in a few remote sequestered places, have no sentiment left to urge them to go afield early to gather the fresh flowers, to taste the

dew, or to raise the May-pole. May Day to them is much as any other day, save from its barometrical associations, and they sneer with derision at any attempt to awaken interest in the fine old festival, putting it down as very far beneath their refined notions about the dignity of the human mind.

But in the merrie England we love to hear and read about, especially under the reign of Catholicism, May Day was something more than a mere bean-feast—an excuse for finery and frivolity. It was a solemn religious festival, in the observance of which was mingled a genuine love of Nature, and a genuine feeling of thanksgiving and happiness. Cromwellian austerity swept away most of the old May Day glories, and although at the Restoration an attempt was made to revive them, their original significance was, to a great extent, lost, and the May festival degenerated. Still it was an honest, simple, country observance, and as such is worthy of notice in this matter-of-fact unsentimental age.

It has before been noticed in these columns as a remarkable fact that our great City of London has always been pre-eminent, not only for her celebration of old festivals, and her observance of old customs, but for the fidelity with which she has clung to them through all changes and times. And as regards May Day it is noticeable that long after May-poles and May dances became objects of contempt and derision in many parts of the country, in the neighbourhood of London, if not in the City itself, it would have been accounted almost sacrilege to have even hinted at their discontinuance or abolition. In fact, it is within the last ten years that the usual Jacks-in-the-Green—the last relics of the old pageantry—finally disappeared, and certainly within the last half-century that milkmaids and chimney-sweeps ceased to hold their annual carnival in the streets. As regards the latter handicraftsmen, it is not a little curious to note, that whereas the Bill for the abolition of the West Indian slave trade was passed upon a first of May, so upon a later first of May were the efforts of certain benevolent gentlemen rewarded by the agreement on the part of the master chimney-sweeps to do away with the scarcely less nefarious traffic in climbing-boys. The association of milkmaids with May Day pageants is peculiarly suggestive of the old times

when the Londoner could, without very much exertion, breathe pure fresh air, and see genuine May flowers blooming in fields almost at his very door.

The Stationers' Company annually held a grand festival on May Day. The morning was devoted to religious observances, and the election of stewards for the coming year. In the afternoon the company betook themselves to the fields—probably those of Islington, or Bunhill, or the pastures which stretched on either side of the great Oxford road—where they gathered flowers, danced round the May-pole, and returned home to a sumptuous banquet.

In the Strand, Leadenhall Street, and Cornhill, stood gigantic May-poles—permanent structures, it would appear from contemporary documents—and the memory of that at Leadenhall still lives in the name of the church of St. Andrew Undershaft. This latter pole existed until the Evil May Day of 1517; that is, it existed as a May-pole, although for long after that date it remained religiously preserved under the eaves of the neighbouring houses, until zealous preachers declaimed against it as an object of idolatry, and it was burnt.

The Evil May Day riots arose from a sudden fit of jealousy which seized the London apprentices against foreign artisans, and for some hours the City was as completely in the hands of the mob as it was later on during the Gordon Riots. The name May Fair also recalls the time when in the then open space near Piccadilly a genuine English fair was held, the principal diversion of which seems to have been the hunting of ducks by dogs. The intense popularity amongst Londoners of these May Day festivals is attested by many writers. Shakespeare, in his play of Henry the Eighth, says, with reference to a mob:

Pray, sir, be patient, 'tis as much impossible,  
Unless we sweep 'em from the door with  
cannons,  
To scatter 'em, as 'tis to make 'em sleep  
On May Day morning, which will never be.

That the ladies had not the entire supremacy in London upon May Day, as they certainly had in the country, seems to be established by Beaumont and Fletcher, in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*:

By the common counsel of the Strand,  
With gilded staff, and crossed scarf,  
The May Lord here I stand.

History shows, too, that May Day celebrations in the olden times were not confined to the lower classes, for we read that

when Henry the Eighth resided at Greenwich, he went with his then queen, Katharine of Arragon, to a grand festival which was held amongst the woods and thickets on Shooter's Hill; and in almost all the expenditure accounts of the great houses which have been preserved, considerable items appear to have been incurred for the celebration of May Day—greater in some cases than the corresponding accounts for the Christmas revels. The Shooter's Hill festival is remarkable as having been the first occasion upon which horse-racing was practised in England.

The metropolitan May-poles were destroyed by Cromwell, and although in the country the May festivals were revived, they became out of fashion in the City itself; and as the fields around became gradually built over, and to go out garland-gathering and dew-sipping necessitated journeys, the London citizens were contented to have their festivals performed for them, they assisting as spectators and no longer as actors.

To describe the innumerable celebrations of May Day in rural England would be going far beyond the limits of this article. Some of the most prominent, however, cannot be passed over without a word of notice. Hitchin in Hertfordshire and Lynn in Norfolk seem to have borne away the palm for the completeness and extent of their festivals.

The Hitchin festival has only been discontinued of recent years; and we are not sure that efforts have not been made lately to restore it. Early on May morning crowds of lads and lasses paraded the old town, singing their peculiar May song, and decking on their way the doors of the chief houses with huge bouquets of flowers. Instead of a Lord and Lady of the May as in London, at the Hitchin festival the supremacy of the day was divided between two wild uncouthly-dressed individuals known as Mad Moll and her husband, whose antics and absurdities caused intense amusement amongst the crowd. In the evening, as was usual at all old English festivals, the company feasted together with much mirth and revelry.

At Lynn the festival bore a strong resemblance to the old Roman celebration of the Floralia, and the reason adduced for this is that a colony of Romans settled at Lynn soon after the introduction of Christianity into Britain, bringing with them their native customs and manners, which have been transmitted, especially in the case of

the May feast, down to a comparatively recent date. The whole population turned out into the fields to gather flowers, which were woven into hoops, and carried about to the sound of pans, pipes, and tabors, whilst the young people indulged in morris-dancing, bear-baiting, back-sword play, and boot-racing. The day wound up with a huge open air feast, which was prolonged until the clock struck twelve. Verily the season, despite the thirteen days' difference before alluded to, must have been very much more genial than what we are accustomed to during the "merry month."

At Penzance a very curious custom prevailed, and may yet exist in that western land where old traditions and customs die such a hard death. Young men and women sat up on May Eve until midnight, when they paraded the town, and then adjourned to drink junket, a mixture of milk, cream, and sugar, after which they danced and gathered flowers in the fields, and, apparently none the worse for their loss of a night's rest, spent May Day in pastimes and feasting.

In the villages about the Wrekin, every May Day morning, neighbours assembled and drank "to all friends round the Wrekin." In Westmoreland stories were told for prizes; and in Gloucestershire, three large cheeses were decked with flowers, carried to the churchyard, rolled three times round the church, and afterwards cut up and distributed, the pieces thus distributed to be faithfully kept for a month, and then as religiously eaten at midnight, failing which, all sorts of misfortune would surely happen. On board the Greenland whalers, the first of May was celebrated by the same ceremonies and horseplay which mark the crossing of the Line in more southern latitudes.

On the eighth of May, the town of Helston, in Cornwall, celebrates its "Furry Day," a distinct relic of the Roman Floralia. Work in the town is strictly forbidden by popular edict, and the unfortunate wight discovered pursuing his ordinary avocation is seized by the crowd, and made to leap, if he can, the river at a spot none too narrow. The crowd then exacts a holiday for all the schools in the town, and subscriptions are solicited, we were about to say extorted, to defray the expense of the "Furry Feast."

Rogation Sunday commenced what was called either "Grass week," on account of the custom of eating nothing but salads and green food during the seven days, or

"Procession week," from the number of religious pageants which distinguished this period in the old Catholic times.

The Thursday following Rogation Sunday, although better known to us as Ascension Day, was commonly called Holy Thursday. The custom of beating the parish bounds upon that day is still religiously observed in the City of London, but was formerly a general custom throughout the kingdom, with the addition of the somewhat barbarous custom known as "bumping," to which the nearest modern usance is a "scrimmage" at a Rugby game of football. At Tissington and one or two other places in the north of England, a very pretty custom, another relic of Roman rule, is still observed of dressing the wells with flowers upon Ascension Day. At West Wickam, in Kent, a very curious custom used to prevail in the Rogation Week. The young men went into the orchards, and encircling each tree, said :

Stand fast root, bear well top,  
God send us a youling sop;  
Every twig, apple big,  
Every bough, apple enou,

and "solicited" money, if refused which, the good wishes were exchanged for maledictions. This "youling," as it is called, is yet another instance of the old Roman influence in Britain, for at springtime, during the feast of the Floralia, *Æolus*, god of the winds, was the chief object of supplication for good crops.

Whitsuntide was formerly a very much more famous festival than it is at present.

Prominent amongst the old English modes of celebrating this season was the custom of holding Whitsun Ales, which, doubtless originated with the Love Feasts of the early Christians. At first the custom was that the churchwardens of parishes should brew ale, sell it, and devote the profits to the use of the poor. But later, the proceedings assumed the character of Saturnalia; a lord and lady and other officers of the ale were chosen, who presided over unlimited feasting and merriment. At Lichfield the great Whit Monday Fair is still held, as are the Cumberland and Yorkshire Hiring Fairs, the last remnants of a very universal custom.

Restoration Day, the twenty-ninth of May, was a truly merry day with our forefathers. Until the destruction of the old Royal Exchange by fire, the statue therein of Charles the Second was solemnly decked with flowers in the presence of all

the City magnates, and it was de rigueur for gentlemen to wear oak leaves in their coats.

At Tiverton, in Devonshire, "Oak Apple Day," as it was called, was marked by a popular demonstration, in which a weirdly attired personage called "Oliver" played the central part. Of course, as personifying an unpopular character, he was the object of much violent practical joking, but as he was allowed to be armed with a stout cudgel, he did not always come off second best.

Merry as May undoubtedly was, and associated as it is in our minds with flowers and genial skies, it does not appear from old proverbs and sayings that unanimity prevailed as to the desirability of its being a period of unalloyed brightness. It was always considered a trying month, and it would be said of a man recovering from a severe illness, "He'll do if he gets up May hill." Again, "A hot May makes a fat churchyard," and "A cold May and a windy makes a fat barn."

Of all our old English customs, these which celebrated May Day seem to us the most pure and wholesome. True, there was doubtless very much over eating and drinking, but an Englishman will eat and drink under all possible circumstances, and, as the Frenchman remarked, if two Englishmen were left at the end of the world, they would celebrate the event by a dinner.

But through all the riot and revelry there runs a genuine appreciation of the bounty and beauty of Nature, which makes us regret that the old May festivals should have fallen so entirely into desuetude; and makes us sigh that, notwithstanding all the conveniences and advantages of modern refinement and civilisation, there cannot be blended a little more of the Arcadian simplicity of the old times with our stern practical time-devouring everyday life.

### A SOUND INVESTMENT.

#### A STORY IN FOUR CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

AMONG the few relatives with whom I maintained anything like intimacy after I had attained to manhood, was a second or third cousin (I have never been quite able to master these grades of relationship), whose name was William Anstream. As my name is Robinson, it will be guessed that this was a cousin on my mother's side, which was the case, but in point of fact, my



name or position has very little to do with this story, which relates to no adventures of my own, but to what I consider an extraordinary passage in the life of William Anstream.

He was my favourite cousin, although I knew that even the moderate intimacy I held with him was not to my advantage; for, without being open to the imputation of anything actually wrong, there was a sort of laxity—"loosefishiness" is a better word—about him, which did not suit a plodding steady young tradesman like myself; yet somehow there was a fascination about the man I could not resist. He only turned up once or twice a year during the four years I knew him after I started in business, and it was a good job for me that he came no oftener. What he was doing I did not know; he had been articled to a builder, but I could never learn that he was building anything. At his mother's death he had come into a small property, but not enough, I felt sure, to stand such expenses as his were, and so feared he was encumbering the little estate, though I did not like to ask him. He never complained; he was always well-dressed, always in good spirits, and despite a reckless twang which was always present in his conversation, he was the most pleasant fellow I knew. And yet I dreaded his appearance.

In the period I have named, I declare I should not have dreamt of any greater dissipation than a day off now and then to go to the Crystal Palace; a visit every half-year to the theatre—my evenings were too valuable to spare more of them, and, perhaps, three or four days at Southend in August. That was all I should have done, but when Anstream came, I was powerless, and was led into the most outrageous enterprises. I went to the Derby, and "wound up," as he called it, at Cremorne. I went to a prize-fight, and was nearly locked up by the police, besides living in dread lest any of the "professionals" might come into my shop at some time, and, recognising me, claim acquaintance as with a "pal." I went to the Argyll Rooms, although I could not dance, but he could, and said he would dance enough for two; the opera, which, as I had no ear for music, was awfully tedious. I went to see the Cambridgeshire run for, a race of which I then for the first time learned the existence. There I must own I won ten pounds, but William borrowed fifteen of me on the strength of this when he left, not one penny of which has he paid. Indeed, he

never left me after one of his visits without borrowing some money, but not on so grand a scale as just mentioned.

At the end of four years, however, he disappeared. Two whole years passed without my seeing Anstream, and so it was plain that something out of the common had happened to him. I thought he had either settled down steadily to work, or was dead; and the first being extremely unlikely, while the second was a contingency which might happen to anybody, I made up my mind that poor Will was no more. I was sorry to think so, for although I knew I was better without him, and that association with him played the very mischief with me, and that the forty pounds he owed me would have been sixty or seventy by this time had he continued his visits, yet I liked him, and would have been glad to hear that he was alive, and doing well. My immediate friends, I must own, thought differently to myself; they held most decided opinions on the subject, which they did not hesitate to express. They said William was working out a sentence of penal servitude, and it was a good job for everyone. I combatted this belief, although I secretly felt that it was very likely to be correct; but even then I could not admit it to be a good thing for poor Anstream.

Well, as I have said, two years and more having passed, I had given him up as lost, and had almost ceased to think about him; in fact, as I was just about to be married I had plenty to occupy my thoughts, and I may add here, that I am quite sure my Emma Matilda (my wife's name, of course) would never have liked Anstream, or tolerated his visits; therefore it was so far a good thing that he had dropped out of sight. You may guess my astonishment then when, one afternoon, just as I had made up my mind that as things were so quiet, I would spare two or three hours, call for Emma Matilda, and take her to Hyde Park, which was a great treat, living as we did in a different part of London—this afternoon, I say, just as I was locking up my desk, I heard a step which sounded familiar, followed by an enquiry in a voice more familiar still, and looking up, I saw my cousin William!

There was no mistaking him; he was decidedly shabbier than of old, he had more hair on his face than before, and what there was was rougher and wilder; there was also a harder look about his features altogether; but he was William Anstream for all that, and, as he caught my eye, he

came with his old smile and jaunty step towards me. For the moment I was heartily glad to see him, but when I recalled my projected visit to Emma Matilda, my exhilaration faded, for I saw I must either forego that pleasure, or slight William.

"Hallo, old fellow!" he said; "you look as if you were going out. Were you?"

"Yes, William, I was," I said; "had you been ten minutes later, you would not have caught me."

"How lucky I dropped in at the moment," said he, "because I shall not have such a chance again. You must put off your trip, Sammy" (Samuel Robinson is my name in full), "and send a shillings-worth of the electric fluid, if it's important, but I must have you this evening to myself, for I am here to bid you good-bye."

"Good-bye!" I echoed.

"Good-bye it is," said William, "for I am off to Queensland the day after to-morrow, per Cormoran, seventeen hundred and three tons, Captain Grobble, if that interests you, but I am going for good and all. I shall never see you and your well-selected stock again, nor can I hope to see your assistants wait upon families daily for their esteemed orders. You recollect your old circulars, Sam? I helped you to draw them up, you know. Well, I shall bid a long farewell to all my greatness, Sammy, and so I want to have a good steady gossip with you. I would pay you that trifle of money if I could, but as I can't, that settles the question in one way, if not in another. You will give me the evening, won't you?"

What could I do? It would have been very harsh to refuse; with all his faults, William had a great deal of sensibility, and I know he would have felt such a slight very keenly. I should much have liked to call on Emma Matilda that night, for as we were to be married in a fortnight, we had of course a thousand things to talk about, but I could see I should have to give it up.

As the reader may naturally feel anxious on the subject, I will say here that I was united to Emma Matilda at the time named—the tenth of September it was—and we spent our bridal trip in the south of England—at Brighton; diversified with excursions to Rottingdean, Shoreham, etc.,

I invited Anstream upstairs, where we could have a quiet cup of tea and a gossip, but he declined. He was always for something irregular.

"No, Sam," he said, "that won't do. You don't mind my smoking, I know, although you were the most awful example in that line, the most preposterous failure I ever saw. But you will be having some one in your rooms who will sniff, and find fault, and be disagreeable, if I smoke for an hour or two, and my yarn will last a pretty good time, you will find. So let us go to the Humpigram Arms—they keep capital whisky, I know—and they will let us have that little room off the landing, where I have smoked many a cigar. Come along; don't be shy; you will not put me to any expense that I cannot afford, which is what is running in your head, I have no doubt, like a good old soul as you are, for I mean you to pay for the evening's entertainment. It is the last time, that's one thing, and you never got out of one of my visits so cheaply, that's another."

Well yes, as he said it was the last time, and perhaps on the whole he had better not stay at my place, or he would propose to remain there until he sailed; so, although I did not like the idea of sitting in a tavern in my own neighbourhood, yet the Humpigram Arms was a respectable house, and Mr. Guilaby, the landlord, was a very respectable man. So I went.

We got the little room—that is, Cousin William got it; he never minded what he asked for, or whom he asked for it; he got, also, his cigars and his whisky—I took bottled stout; and as soon as his cigar was fairly alight, he began.

"I suppose you have wondered what has become of me during all this time?" he said.

"Very often," I replied; "indeed I had given you up for dead."

"Had you really?" he exclaimed; "well, come now, that was more charitable than I expected. There were some among your friends who thought I had come to a worse fate than that, I will bet." He was exactly right there, but I did not tell him so. "No, Sammy," he continued; "you were all wrong. I am not dead, as you see, and I have not been in 'quod'; at present I owe Her Majesty nothing for board and lodging. Nothing of the kind, old fellow, but I have been engaged in a speculation; a big thing for me. Had it succeeded I should have gone to Australia, and I am going to Australia because it did not succeed; so, in the essential fact of my emigration, the result of the speculation was of no consequence; in the manner, style, and prospects of that emigration it made all the difference. You knew Jem Skeldon, I think?"

"No, I do not remember any one of that name."

"Well, I am sure you must have heard me mention him often enough," continued Anstream, in reply to my negative; "he was a very intimate acquaintance of mine. I prefer to speak of him as an acquaintance rather than as a friend, because, although we met often, and did a great many bits of sporting business together, yet our intimacy went no further. I did not know where he lived, what he was, or any such particulars about him, and had no idea he was better informed in reference to myself. I was enlightened upon this subject, however, for one day, when we had been having a chat over our lunch in the City, he said, quite to my surprise, 'Bill, I can put a good thing in the way of any man who is sharp, can hold his tongue, is not in a hurry, and can help me with a little capital. I think you are just the man for the purpose; if you think so too, make an appointment to meet me this evening, or come to my rooms. I live in the City Road; there is my card; give me a look in, and we will talk the matter over.' As you may imagine, Sammy, I was astonished, but decided at once there could be no harm in hearing what he had to say, so I promised to call upon him. It rather puzzled me to know how he came to make up his mind that I had any capital, or could get any—you can guess directly, Sammy, the only way in which I could raise any capital—the four houses left me by the poor old lady. Two had gone before this, but Skeldon had somehow found out that I still owned the others. I never learnt how he knew this, but know it he did, and made no secret about it, for when I began to feel my way, in my enquiries, he saw my drift, and anticipated me at once. He said: 'I see you want to know why I pitched upon you. Well, I will tell you as straight as a rule. It will be of no use for us to attempt the business I have in my mind, unless we can trust each other, and are quite candid, so I tell you that I like your looks, and your ways—so far as I have seen—and I know you own a couple of houses in Lambeth. Like a good many of us, you are not making the best of your chances, you have parted with two houses, to no good end, and you will do the same with those you have left, I expect, if something does not turn up. Now here is the chance turning up that you are waiting for, and I can show you how to keep your property, make a good sum besides, and put me on my legs. That is what I want you for

to-night.' I liked his candour, and told him I would come. I went, and there, Sammy, my story begins. But lor! what a world this is, to be sure!"

#### CHAPTER II.

"LET us rest a moment, Sammy, before I begin," said my cousin with a sigh. "It's dreadful to look back upon what I have seen and done, and the awful worry I have gone through. A little smoke will do me good." Upon this he leant back in the Humpigram Arms easy-chair, and smoked quite half-way through his cigar in silence; he might have gone on still longer, but finding he had finished his first glass of whisky-and-water, he was obliged to rouse himself to renew the supply, and this seemed to remind him of his story. "Well, Sam," he resumed, "as you did not know Jem Skeldon, or, at any rate, do not remember him, it is of no use for me to say very much about him, but I can tell you that if you had known him, you would have said he was one of the keenest business men you ever met, and you would have been quite ready to fall in with any suggestion he made. I felt like that, I know, and when I went to his house, I found it was a pretty big suggestion he had to make, and a really sound one, that was a fact. It was of course a business suggestion, and, I repeat, a really sound investment, but it was not exactly in the ordinary way of business—some people might have thought it—some people might, I say—but there are so many schemes in the world that—— In point of fact this scheme——"

"Well, William, what was the scheme?" I asked, much surprised at this faltering and beating about the bush, which was not at all like his usual manner; "what was it?"

"Well," he recommenced, giving a gulp, as if he had just swallowed something, "it was a scheme in connection with life assurance. A big thing I say, a—that is, well, Jem Skeldon had hit upon a first-rate plan for making money. He laid it before me, and as I was getting rapidly to low-water mark and as plenty of people had bested me, of course there was no harm in my trying to best others; especially a rich company that could afford it. He said that he knew a man who had gone into business, with money borrowed from a relation, and to secure this advance, he had insured his life in a first-rate office for five thousand pounds. Of course the lender was to hold this policy, but in the very first year they had quarrelled, the relative took possession of

the business, handing back the policy, on which only one half-yearly premium had been paid. The owner could not keep up the payments, for he had scarcely a shilling in the world and the next half-year was almost due. So he was going to California, or somewhere, and the policy must lapse; consequently, he would be very glad to let anyone have it for a five-pound note. I thought, at first, he meant that we should buy this policy, and wait until it fell in, so I naturally asked him how old the man was, and the amount of the premiums. I was quite taken aback to hear that the man was only thirty years old, and that the premium was about a hundred and forty pounds per year. 'My dear fellow,' I said, 'we can't stand that; with extra premium for living abroad, it will come to nigh upon two hundred a year, and we may have to pay it for another thirty years; in short, the man may outlive us—no, it won't do.' 'Why, you are not so green,' said Jem, 'as to think I fetched you here to propose such a move as that! It would be better to turn into the streets and sell lights a penny a box, than to wait for the profits on such a life as there is in this policy. No, sir! here is my idea, and it can be carried out.' Then he told me what it was, just as I am going to tell you, Sammy. I felt that I was in the presence of a master-spirit in reality; that of all the smart men I had ever come across, I had never seen his equal, and I have never seen his equal since. 'My idea, Bill, is this,' he began. 'We will buy this policy—in fact, I have bought it, it was my last fiver, but I could not let the chance slip, and I tell you honestly, that if I could pay the premiums, and find the other expenses, I should not let any one else in; but I can't. Well, I have secured the policy, and Mr. Absalom Watts—that's his name, and the name is everything to us, as you will see—goes to California. I know, too, he goes under another cognomen, for he wants to start afresh, having been up to some games here, that will not help him there, if they are known. So, as far as he is concerned, he might just as well be dead. Now, we pay the next premium—you will, for I can't—all right, and then we find some poor beggar in the last stage of a decline, hard up, and glad to lend himself to anything for a good home. We offer him that home; we offer him, and mean it too, plenty of nourishment, wine and chickens, and all that, and certainly the most respectable doctor in the village to attend him. It will be a village, for we must take him somewhere

where we are not known, and, of course, where nobody knows him; one of us will have to stay with him, but it will not be for long, I will take care of that.' 'Why, you don't propose that we should—' I commenced, for I was horror-struck at the form his idea began to take, but Jem laughed so naturally, that I at once knew I was wrong. 'Propose what?' he said; 'propose to poison the poor chap?—that is what you are afraid of! Ha! ha! ha! No, Bill, I am not so bad as that. All the doctor orders to give him strength, and keep him alive, he shall have; but I will take care to pick out a man who cannot be kept alive, and all I ask in return for our kindness is that he shall take the name of Absalom Watts while he is under our care. Of course I shall not tell him why, and if he suspects anything, he won't peach for his own sake; for fear of losing all the comforts and attention he is receiving, he will never split. There you are! what do you think of it?' 'Think of what?' I replied, for I had not caught the idea yet. It was too simple, too grand, I suppose, like all these splendid inspirations."

"Well," I said, as Anstream paused to take a sip of grog, "I do not wonder at it; I have not myself the slightest idea as to what your friend was driving at, nor can I see the slightest scheme in all you have told me."

"You will soon be enlightened," continued my cousin; "as I was. 'You don't see it!' exclaimed Jem; 'why, he will be there as Absalom Watts, notice of change of address will be duly sent to the office, and from this new address, the premium, if another one becomes due, will be duly paid. The patient will die there; his doctor, a great gun of undoubted respectability, will send his certificate from there. I shall try to get to a village where lives some recognised medical referee of the office, it will look so well to employ him. The burial certificate will be as regular as it can be, and the Royal Cornhill—for I told you the policy was in one of the very best offices—will pay up like the Bank of England. I don't say anything about the difficulty of bowling us out in the game, because it is not difficult, it is impossible! Absalom Watts has a policy, Absalom Watts removes to the country, Absalom Watts is ill, and is attended by the company's own doctor, and Absalom Watts dies from natural causes. Absalom Watts is buried; we hold his policy, duly transferred, therefore we get his money. I reckon it will cost us, first and last, including



both premiums, two hundred pounds, and on condition of your paying the expenses—I do not want anything for myself, beyond board and lodging, while I am in attendance on my poor friend, Absalom Watts—you shall have half of the money. I will reckon your providing for the charges as being equal to my original idea, and that is acting liberally, you must own. I shall calculate on coming into the money about next spring—we were talking in September. ‘But won’t it be suspicious,’ I said, ‘to have a man dying of consumption, who was no doubt in good health when he effected his insurance?’ ‘Not a bit,’ said Skeldon; ‘do you suppose I did not think over such a point as that, the very first thing? Our man has only been ill a very short time, we must stick to that story. It is a galloping consumption, of course, and as the policy will be more than a year old before the doctor sees him, he will have had time to catch a dreadful cold, last October, which settled on his lungs, getting much worse all through the winter, and this very trying spring. Oh! that’s all right.’ I asked a good many questions, but Jem was ready on every point, and I could not find a flaw in his plan. It was indispensable that I should do something to pull myself round, and nothing had previously offered so business-like, prompt, and straightforward as this. Before I left, I had agreed to join him; I promised to raise a couple of hundreds on the houses, which, as you must know, Sam, were well worth a thousand; I was to get this at once, as the premium must be paid without delay, while in the meantime he was to look after a suitable representative. We shook hands at parting, both being in high spirits, which was natural enough with such a prospect. I was especially delighted, for I was really glad to see at last a tangible business opening, for I felt that I was sadly wasting my time. It did not take me long to raise the money, and the premium was paid all right; then by appointment I met Skeldon, who said he had his eye upon two or three likely parties, but, having to proceed with considerable caution, had done nothing yet. We had, as I have told you, an appointed rendezvous in the City, but I had given him my address, in case of any emergency, and a few nights after this last interview, I found a note from him at my lodgings; it contained only a few words, but they were important. ‘Be at the old place to-morrow morning; I have made a move.’ You may be sure I kept this appointment, and so did

Skeldon. ‘It’s all right,’ he said in a whisper; ‘I have got the man. I thought I had, when last I saw you, but did not like to tell you so, for fear of disappointment. A very respectable, well-educated chap, almost too quick for us, but that is a good fault.’ ‘How do you mean, Jem?’ I asked. ‘I mean that he saw my drift before I meant him to see it,’ returned Skeldon; ‘but it turned out to be a good job. I was uncertain how much I should tell him, and his quickness saved me a lot of awkward explanation. I have taken a room for him close to my own place; come and see him.’ This I could not refuse to do, but I really did not like the task; there was something in it so much like a butcher inspecting the sheep he was thinking of buying, in the idea of my going to appraise this poor wretch, to see if he was near enough to death to make it worth my while to buy him. However, Skeldon had been obliged to see a great deal of him, so I could not refuse; accordingly I went. Jem took me to a quiet house in a street off the City Road, and on being admitted, I heard a hollow cough, followed by a groan. ‘That’s him!’ exclaimed Skeldon, as we halted in the passage. Him! Of course I knew it was him. I had never heard such an appalling sepulchral cough in my life, and my reluctance to see the poor fellow increased. Not so with Skeldon; his face was quite beaming with smiles, and his eyes sparkled and twinkled as they met mine. We entered the back parlour. ‘Mr. Tobbs—my friend Mr. Anstream, who has come to see you.’ I shook hands with the stranger, who was lying on the sofa, and said I hoped he felt better. He said ‘yes,’ he thought he did, and the exertion of speaking brought on a cough which I feared would have shaken him to pieces, and left him so exhausted and panting, that Skeldon held a bottle of ammonia to his nostrils to revive him. At last he recovered a little, but even then lay on the sofa for some time without speaking, and every minute or so coughed in a miserable hacking way that was painful to hear. Such a spectre! I never saw the like in my life. His face was almost as fleshless as a skeleton’s; his eyes were unnaturally prominent; his cheeks were drawn in as if he were sucking them, while pale as he was, his straight black hair, by the contrast, made him look absolutely ghastly. His hands were more like claws than the hands of a human being, but it is of no use my describing him, I can only say I never

before saw so deathlike an object alive. By a great effort I managed to chat a little with Skeldon, until, presently, Mr. Tobbs raised himself on his elbow, and said with many breaks and pauses caused by his weary cough: 'I am pleased to see you, Mr. Anstream. Mr. Skeldon prepared me for your visit, and I wish to say that the terms of our arrangement are quite understood by me, and I agree to them.' 'Do not trouble yourself to speak about it,' I said; 'I am quite satisfied to leave it to you and Mr. Skeldon.'

"'No, sir, that will not do,' returned Tobbs; 'life is uncertain—my life is perhaps not uncertain—and I wish you to know that I am thoroughly with you. For some reason, it is quite immaterial to me what reason, and I have no wish to enquire—for some reason, I say, Mr. Skeldon and yourself propose that I should put myself in your care, and should assume the name of Absalom Watts, instead of Thomas Tobbs, my real name. Well, gentlemen, I can easily understand that some family reasons may bring this about, and as I am very poor, very weak, and have no prospect of any comfort during my short life, unless I am helped by somebody, I cheerfully accept your offer. I have not, I believe, a relative in the world to care for me; certainly I have none in England, for I was born in India, and never remember to have seen either of my parents; so I have none to interest themselves for me while I live, or to grieve when I go. Whatever your plans may be, I hope they can be arranged in a short time, for three doctors at the Consumption Hospital have told me that if I live through the winter, which they consider to be almost impossible, I cannot survive the spring. Knowing this, I am only too happy to accept any offer which secures me the comfort and nourishment I require.'

"The poor fellow was nearly a quarter of an hour, I should think, in getting through this speech, and had another spasm of coughing at its finish. I was glad to find the position so well understood, and with a few civil words, I took my leave. 'Well, old fellow!' said Jem, clapping me on the shoulder, as we emerged from the house, 'will he do? Have I got the right man? Is the policy worth keeping up now?' When sitting by the side of that poor spectre, I had grown almost ashamed of my share in the business, but when I was out of his sight, I recollected that we

did not cause his illness, that we were actually prolonging his life by our assistance, and so were his real friends—in short, I quite entered into Skeldon's good spirits, and we drank a glass of sherry in celebration of our success.

"'And now,' said Jem, when we left the restaurant, 'there must be no time lost. I shall want some money at once, for he is already expensive to keep, requiring, as he does, so many nourishing things, jellies and the like, and he is so shaky that the sooner we get him away, and put things in order, the better. I know two or three very quiet places in the Staines district, Harmondsworth, Stanwell, and all about there, which I think will suit us, so am going down this afternoon to see if I can get rooms for myself and my poor friend—relation he will be. Ha! ha! ha! 'These places are out of the way of all ordinary rambles, yet you can get to them very well from London by rail, and twenty minutes or so in a fly. It will be somewhere down there that I shall settle. I will take twenty pounds, for which of course I shall account.' I gave him the money and said: 'I hope, Jem, that the poor fellow won't—' I hardly liked to say what was in my mind, but Skeldon understood me. 'I know what you mean,' said he, as I paused; 'I also am a little afraid of it. You hope he won't go off too soon—die in the removing, for instance; so do I. I should like the poor beggar to live at least three months, although it will be expensive, because by that time things will have settled down, and the doctor, and the landlady, and everybody will be used to seeing and speaking of Mr. Watts.'

"We thought that with care, nourishment, and medical attendance, we might succeed in keeping him alive for two or three months longer, but life, we owned, was very uncertain. It is."

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